

PURITANISM AND SOCIETY

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first decade of the seventeenth century, which shows that, of 281 ministers whose names are known, 35 belonged to London and Middlesex, 96 to the three manufacturing counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex, 29 to Northamptonshire, 17 to Lancashire, and only 104 to the whole of the rest of the country.¹¹

The phenomenon was so striking as to evoke the comments of contemporaries absorbed in matters of profounder spiritual import than sociological generalization. "Most of the tenants of these gentlemen," wrote Baxter, "and also most of the poorest of the people, whom the other called the Rabble, did follow the gentry, and were for the King. On the Parliament's side were (besides themselves) the smaller part (as some thought; of the gentry in most of the counties, and freeholders, and the middle sort of men ; especially in those corporations and counties which depend on cloathing and such manufactures." He explained the fact by the liberalizing effect of constant correspondence with the greater centres of trade, and cited the example of France, where it was "the merchants and middle sort of men that were Protestants."¹¹¹

The most conspicuous example was, of course, London, which had financed the Parliamentary forces, and which continued down to the Revolution to

be *par*
excellence " the rebellious city," returning
four Dis-
sentrers to the Royalist Parliament of
1661, sending
its mayor and aldermen to accompany Lord
Russell
when he carried the Exclusion Bill from the
Commons
to the Lords, patronizing Presbyterian
ministers long
after Presbyterianism was proscribed,
nursing the
Whig Party, which stood for tolerance, and
sheltering
the Whig leaders against the storm
which broke in
1681* But almost everywhere the same
fact was to
be observed. The growth of Puritanism,
wrote a
hostile critic, was " by meanes of the City of
London
(the nest and seminary of the seditious
faction) and by
reason of its universal! trade throughout
the kingdom^